

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Barkway Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

High Street,
Barkway,
Royston,
Hertfordshire.
SG8 8EF

Diocese of St Albans

LEA: Hertfordshire

SIAS Inspection : 25th May 2006

Previous S23 Inspection:

URN: 117422

Headteacher: Jenny Heinzelmann

SIAS Inspector : Alan Thornsby 137

Context

Barkway is a small village school near Royston that serves a wide catchment area. The small pupil numbers result in a secure learning environment.

Summary Judgement

Barkway First school is a good Church of England school that because of its small size enables all pupils to succeed in developing academically and personally. Children are known on an individual basis and have very good attitudes to learning.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the headteacher and staff to the care of the pupils.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils to Religious Education
- The strengths of the cross curricular links in teaching Religious Education.

Focus for development

- Develop self-evaluation as a distinctive church school and implementation of its findings.
- Create a distinctive focus for worship in school
- Ensure that the standard of written work reflects the high standard of the pupils oral contributions.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

The school, through its distinctive character is good in meeting the needs of all learners. This is because the school ethos promotes a family like situation of safety and care. From this a respect for self and others, including tolerance, is developed. Policies and practices confirm the schools foundation as a church school. Pupils know that they are valued and their views are sought, often in conversation. They are confident and articulate in all situations.

The high levels of staff expectation encourage achievements that are recognised by reward stickers and certificates. The school has a tradition of involvement in initiatives such as the TES newspaper award and the regular successes of the school reflect that high standards are maintained. Children make good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through cross-curricular links, which are often creative arts based. The relationships between all members of school are good, the small size of the school means that staff work together well and know all the pupils. Parents acknowledge especially the availability of the headteacher in the playground each morning. Everyone is welcomed to school each day and this ensures that issues are dealt with promptly. The whole family atmosphere of the school encourages understanding and support for all.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

The worshipping experience provided by the school is good. This is because Collective Worship follows an agreed cycle of themes and all staff are involved in planning and informal evaluation. The policy for assembly also states that a large part of assembly may be used to teach religious education because of the family like situation of the school. This reinforces the importance of themes

that may be explored before and after the act of worship that retains its own distinctiveness. Pupils enjoy taking part in worship by being involved in organising and sharing prayers. They value contributing elements to prayers because 'it makes the prayer ours and not just the teachers.' They also speak of the benefits of sharing together helping them to reflect although there is no specific focal point for worship to support times of reflection. Worship is used to develop social, moral and spiritual development. Thus during the inspection the pupils were introduced to a fund raising opportunity through slides and discussion. Members of other faith groups visit the school and this strengthens children's knowledge and understanding. A newly appointed vicar is keen to strengthen and develop the links between the school and church communities. This will help to further the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Anglican church.

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

Religious Education is good. This is because Religious Education is regarded by the whole school as 'a way to learn about others as well as yourself.' The pupils understand the importance of learning about others and how to treat them. Planning follows the Hertfordshire syllabus, which is annotated by staff. Topics are often explored with well-established cross-curricular links. A range of teaching strategies, knowledge of individuals and small class numbers means that effective teaching and learning can take place and all pupils can be included in questioning. Work is related to pupils' personal experience-in studying special books a parent explained the relevance of each of her collection of Bibles. Pupils and teacher then questioned and discussed their own choices after a careful and respectful examination. All of the pupils asked each other if they could look at each other's choice. Younger pupils used a knowledge gained from a visit to church to describe the position and usage of salient features before creating a church in school. This gives a strong focus for children learning through play. An enthusiastic coordinator who leads by example supports teachers' knowledge and expectations of pupils. As a result pupils achievement is at least in line with national expectations. The work recorded in books by the pupils does not always reflect their contributions in lessons because the tasks set do not match the pupils' ability in terms of differentiation. The coordinator is aware there are no assessment procedures in place to support teachers in their planning.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is good. This is because the headteacher has a commitment to the development of each individual in school. This is evident in her playground duty to welcome everyone into school each day. The ethos is well communicated and understood by staff and parents. Staff are carefully selected to meet the needs of a small school. Prayer is a feature of the school being used at the end of the day as well as in worship, and in governors' meetings. Thus both Religious Education and Collective Worship have a high profile as vital elements in school to promote self-awareness as well as the awareness of the needs of others. Adults in school present good role models for pupils in the ways in which they behave and speak to others. Although a school council represents the pupil voice, the small size of the school and the approachability of the staff means that the voice of even the smallest member is heard. Parents' views are gathered via questionnaires and by the open door policy of the school.

The school has yet to carry out a formal self-evaluation as a church school that will be pivotal in the school's future development. The newly appointed vicar has in a short space of time begun to explore the strengthening of church school links to develop mutually beneficial relationship. There are secure links with village community through activities such as the Remembrance Day Service, village fete and maypole dancing.

SIAS report May 2006 Barkway First School, High Street, Barkway, Royston, Hertfordshire.
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